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SUBJECT: DOMINICAN POLITICS #15: HATUEY - RAGING OR
FERNINAND THE BULL?

1. (SBU) This is #15 in our current series on politics in the
Dominican Republic:

Hatuey - Raging or Ferdinand the Bull?

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It is too easy to make fun of Hatuey Decamps, the
dispossessed president of the Partido Revolucionario
Dominicano, now the founder of a new political group, the
Partido Revolucionario Social Democrata.
With his 1930,s-style good looks and his eloquent campaign
delivery he seems curiously "retro."

Hatuey fought as hard as he could to prevent the decisions
that allowed Hiplito Meja to run for a
second term. Meja,s supporters in the "PPH" faction outdid
him every step of the way. They changed
the Constitution, refused to recognize Hatuey,s authority in
the party, declared illegal the PRD
convention convened and chaired by Hatuey in December 2003,
and then in the PRD convention that
nominated Hiplito, they voted Hatuey out of the party
presidency. Hatuey,s followers retaliated
by physically taking over the PRD,s traditional headquarters
building on Calle Bolivar in the Gazcue
neighborhood, an occupation that continues today.

The Supreme Court declined to hear Hatuey,s petition to be
reinstated as PRD president, when it confirmed
last week that the National Electoral Board does indeed have
the last word on the legitimacy of internal
processes of political parties.

Hatuey had no further legal recourse within the PRD. He had
never captured more than about 10 percent
of the party faithful, despite having served as a member of
Congress, chief of staff to President Jorge
Blanco, PRD secretary general and president, and vice
president of the Socialist International. PRD
convention organizer former Vice President Milagros Ortiz
Bosch had expressed the hope that Hatuey
could be reintegrated in the party, but Hatuey in his
grandiloquence spoke to the nation twice last
week. On Thursday he ranted against Meja, calling that
administration "corrupt and "an embarrassment
to the party." He recited the disasters of PRD leaders
elected to preside over the Dominican Republic:
"Bosch lasted seven months; Guzm killed himself; Jorge
Blanco wound up in jail; Hiplito wrecked the
country. We have spent 54 years in the opposition because of
their bad governments."

On Friday night, March 4, he told the nation that he was
establishing a new party, the Social Democratic
Revolutionary Party (PRSD). Repeatedly invoking the late PRD
leader Jose Francisco Pena Gomez, Hatuey
promised a return to founding principles. He displayed the
new flag, with a bull as its central emblem.
Hours later, the signs and symbols on the old PRD
headquarters were replaced by those of the new party.
And on the weekend, as PRD candidates for the party
presidency met in a local hotel for a debate, Hatuey
took his campaign to Santiago, the second city. He is
likely to take with him 1 or 2 of the 29 PRD
senators and 5 or 6 of the 47 PRD congressional
representatives.

Few in the mainline PRD are sorry to see him go. Hiplito
Meja, who came out of a long seclusion just
two weeks ago, commented, "I never replied to his hatred and
complexes." Referring to a campaign song
Hatuey had used against his own presidential re-election
effort, Meja added, "Now he,s the one who fits
the slogan he used, from the old merengue: Old friend, go
along in peace."

This past weekend the PRD held ceremonies at the grave of

Pea Gomez, commemorating the birth of the charismatic leader who never made it to the presidency. Hatuey staged his own media event at graveside the same day, as he did last year.

Behind this all is the question of charisma versus continuity of party structures. Although the PRD lost last May, it was not smashed by Hiplito,s defeat; it retained its core of 34 percent of the electorate, principally among the dispossessed. Its greatest lack currently is leadership. Symbolic of that is the current race for the PRD presidency, populated with graying figures Sen. Ramon Alburquerque, former party chief Enmanuel Esquea and former culture minister Tony Raful. Mild-mannered Orlando Jorge has the inside track for secretary general, but is challenged by drug-tainted Guido Gomez. Pea Gomez,s widow Peggy Cabral has just added her name as a candidate for secretary general, perhaps to fill the vacuum.

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Hatuey,s PRSD is likely to be a streak in the sky, bright but self-destructive. Juan Bosch tried the tactic in 1973 and Jacobo Majluta did the same in 1990 but neither got to the presidency. But - - we remember that in other countries in the hemisphere established parties have fallen into institutional decay and disrepute, opening opportunities for charismatic opportunists. Hatuey has the megalomania and he has begun the campaign, preparing himself in case Leonel Fernndez and the PLD make mistakes serious enough to open the way for him.

12. (U) Drafted by Michael Meigs.

13. (U) This piece and others in our series can be consulted on our classified SIPRNET site <http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/wha/santodomingo/> along with extensive other material.
HERTELL